

## Cold dose of reality for college-bound Californians - Ventura County Star

By Lt. Gov. John Garamendi  
Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Thanksgiving is usually a time when we gather with family and friends to celebrate all the blessings in our lives. But for hundreds of thousands of qualified, college-bound Californians, the holiday will be filled with anxiety and uncertainty. Nov. 30 is the deadline for students to submit their applications to state colleges and universities for fall 2009. For far too many of these young adults, the state's future work force, it will be a dream unrealized.

California is cutting college admissions, and the prospect of tuition hikes — to help rescue the state from its self-inflicted financial mess — would push higher education even further out of reach. It's a cold dose of reality for an 18-year-old just getting started.

We are at a critical moment in the state's history. Do we have the same foresight to invest in our children as our parents before us? Or are we so desperate for another short-term fix to the state deficit that we're willing to sacrifice our future teachers, solar-energy engineers, film producers and nurses?

The governor's proposed \$2.6 billion cut to education will clearly slam the door on 10,000 incoming students at the California State University campuses. Whether it does the same at the University of California's campuses is now in the hands of the Legislature and governor. As a UC regent, I urged the board last week to remove tuition hikes that had been woven into the UC's budget proposal for the next fiscal year.

The regents did the right thing by deciding to forgo the fee increases, but unless the governor and Legislature follow suit and fund the universities, fees will rise and enrollment also will be cut at the 10 UC campuses.

While there are no easy ways to close California's mounting deficit, an inequitable share of the burden is being hoisted upon the backs of students. That's unfathomable in a state with a \$2 trillion economy. This year, the only substantive tax increase in the budget was a \$250 million

tax increase on the students of California in the CSU and UC system.

The California economy, the seventh-wealthiest in the world, was built on a free or affordable education system that spans from K-12 to community colleges, CSU and the UC systems. This has been the foundation of California's economic success, but our commitment to producing an educated work force and astute citizenry is rapidly disappearing with the constant tuition hikes. Our state colleges are turning into the worst aspects of the Ivy League schools — they are become exclusionary and financially out of reach. It doesn't have to be that way.

California needs about \$10 billion to close the budget gap, and this will no doubt be a painful and difficult task. But we are Californians, we persevere in the aftermath of deadly wildfires, earthquakes and drought. We do so by returning to our core values and priorities: the well-being and safety of our families, our friends and our communities. Chief among those is the education of our children. We can find the money without selling out our future work force.

We need to make sure the Legislature and governor understand the history of this great state, how a free or affordable public-education system has been the fundamental fuel for our economic growth. California needs to send more of its young adults to college, not fewer. California needs to attract more top-notch professors and establish more world-class research facilities, not fewer.

This will prepare the California economy to excel when the economy finally rebounds, as we all know it will. Our students and our state cannot survive on the starvation diet California's \$2 trillion economy is feeding them. Enough is enough.

— California Lt. Gov. John Garamendi is also a UC regent and CSU trustee.